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## Receptionists and Information Clerks

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### Nature of the Work

Receptionists and information clerks are charged with a responsibility that may have a lasting impact on the success of an organization: making a good first impression. These workers often are the first representatives of an organization a visitor encounters, so they need to be courteous, professional, and helpful. Receptionists answer telephones, route calls, greet visitors, respond to inquiries from the public, and provide information about the organization. Some receptionists are responsible for the coordination of all mail into and out of the office. In addition, receptionists contribute to the security of an organization by helping to monitor the access of visitors—a function that has become increasingly important in recent years.

Whereas some tasks are common to most receptionists and information clerks, the specific responsibilities of receptionists vary with the type of establishment in which they work. For example, receptionists in hospitals and in doctors' offices may gather patients' personal and financial information and direct them to the proper waiting rooms. In beauty or hair salons, by contrast, receptionists arrange appointments, direct customers to the hairstylist, and may serve as cashiers. In factories, large corporations, and government offices, they may provide identification cards and arrange for escorts to take visitors to the proper office. Those working for bus and train companies respond to inquiries about departures, arrivals, stops, and other related matters.

Increasingly, receptionists are using multiline telephone systems, personal computers, and fax machines. Despite the widespread use of automated answering systems or voice mail, many receptionists still take messages and inform other employees of visitors' arrivals or cancellation of an appointment. When they are not busy with callers, most receptionists are expected to perform a variety of office duties, including opening and sorting mail, collecting and distributing parcels, transmitting and delivering facsimiles, updating appointment calendars, preparing travel vouchers, and performing basic bookkeeping, word processing, and filing.

### Employment

Receptionists and information clerks held about 1.1 million jobs in 2002. Almost 90 percent worked in service-providing industries. Among service-providing industries, health care and social assistance industries—including doctors' and dentists' offices, hospitals, nursing homes, urgent-care centers, surgical centers, and clinics—employed one-third of all receptionists and information clerks. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, government, and real-estate industries also employed large numbers of receptionists and information clerks. About 3 of every 10 receptionists and information clerks worked part time.

### Job Outlook

Employment of receptionists and information clerks is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2012. This increase will result from rapid growth in services industries—including physicians' offices, law firms, temporary-help agencies, and consulting firms—where most are employed. In addition, turnover in this large occupation will create numerous openings as receptionists and information clerks transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force altogether. Opportunities should be best for persons with a wide range of clerical and technical skills, particularly those with related work experience.



*A large number of receptionists are employed by healthcare establishments.*

Technology should have conflicting effects on the demand for receptionists and information clerks. The increasing use of voice mail and other telephone automation reduces the need for receptionists by allowing one receptionist to perform work that formerly required several. However, the increasing use of other technology has caused a consolidation of clerical responsibilities and growing demand for workers with diverse clerical and technical skills. Because receptionists and information clerks may perform a wide variety of clerical tasks, they should continue to be in demand. Further, they perform many tasks that are interpersonal in nature and are not easily automated, ensuring continued demand for their services in a variety of establishments.

### Sources of Additional Information

State employment offices can provide information on job openings for receptionists.

(See introductory statement on information and record clerks for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)